

ECUADOR - HACIENDA ZULETA

ITINERARY

The collection point for the ride can be Quito airport or Quito city and we can arrange transfers for you.

Hacienda Zuleta is situated in the Northern Highlands, about two hours from the capital. The hacienda stands at roughly at the same altitude as Quito (c. 2,800m).

Your flights can arrive and depart at any time.

Check-in to your room is possible from 15:00, although you may arrive earlier if you wish and make use of the main facilities until your room is ready. On departure day, you will need to vacate your room by midday so that it can be made ready for arriving guests.

If your Spanish is good enough you may prefer to take a taxi to Hacienda Zuleta. It would be advisable to agree a price before setting off. If you plan on this option you should let us know the estimated time of your arrival, so that we can be sure a representative of Hacienda Zuleta will be on hand to meet you and show you to your room etc.

The itinerary is flexible, taking into account guest preferences, riding level and the weather. On some days you will set out on morning and afternoon rides, returning to the hacienda for lunch. On other days you may go out on full day rides with a picnic lunch.



Depending on which route you ride, you could be in the saddle for between around 2 and 6 hours. A full day ride is around 5-6 hours and includes a picnic. A half-day ride means approximately 3-4 hours, which can be split into morning and afternoon rides. A short ride is between 1-2 hours.



If you wish for an English-speaking riding guide to accompany you, then this needs to be booked and paid for in advance. As well as trail rides, carriage rides (min 3 people) and riding lessons are usually available. The riding and non-riding activities you would like to do can be decided once you are at the hacienda.



If there is time on your first day you may have an introduction to the horses and chagras, followed by a familiarisation ride. Thereafter the rides vary every day, according to the season and wishes of the guests.



Local conditions can sometimes cause variation in the riding routes, hours in the saddle and distances covered, but any changes are made with your best interests in mind. There are many long and short routes from the hacienda into the surrounding hills, communities and up into the paramo (high Andes). The following is a description of some possible rides you might do - the order of the rides is not set and these are purely examples:

Lake View (full day)

After breakfast, set off on a full day ride exploring the vistas and landscapes that surround Zuleta. Follow a route up Mount Cubilche, past eucalyptus groves with views of Ibarra, Mount Cayambe and Mount Antisana. After around two hours in the saddle, take a path through the pine forest which curves around the mountain. On the other side of Cubilche are the landscapes of Imbabura and San Pablo Lake. The lake is set in a wide basin surrounded by volcanoes, and provides the perfect back-drop to a picnic lunch. After lunch, return to Zuleta by a different route.

La Chimba (full day)

This ride is a mixture of scenic landscapes and history. Ride over the hills behind the hacienda to the pastures and forests of La Merced. Descend into farmland and reach the village of Pesillo, with its quaint cemetery and communally-owned hacienda. Ride through the settlement before arriving at La Chimba, the resting place of local heroine Tránsito Amaguaña, an indigenous woman who fought for the rights of her people. The burial site is a large stone cairn-like structure that at certain times of year marks the passage of the sun. There is a little museum with information on Tránsito's life and struggle, along

with beautiful murals and a permanent exhibition on indigenous faces and dress. After a picnic lunch, return to Zuleta by a different route.

Mount Cubilche (full day)

This beautiful ride takes you through the community and up Mount Cubilche as fields and mountains unfurl behind you. Snow-capped Mount Cayambe and Mount Antisana are visible on a clear day as you climb higher, past eucalyptus groves and corn fields. The mountains part on your right as you pass the forested Mount Cunrro and there is a view all the way to the city of Ibarra. Cut through an area called Pan de Azúcar – so named for its sugar-loaf shape – then on to a plateau dotted with wild flowers and ponds. The road continues winding up to small pine forests near the final ascent to Cubilche where you guide your horse around scented trees. After some time, reach the start of the páramo – the high grasslands – where you are greeted with views of the entire valley from Ibarra on the left, Angochagua and the Hacienda in the centre and all the way over to towering Cayambe. At the top of Cubilche you find three beautiful lakes – part of the volcano's caldera. Finally, loop back via a different route through Zuleta village.

Angochagua and La Rinconada (full day)

This ride explores the local valleys of Angochagua and La Rinconada and offers great mountain scenery and the rolling countryside of La Magdalena and Cunrro. Mount Imbabura can often be seen on the horizon. There are cultural aspects, like visiting Angochagua's church or Fernando Colimba's house museum, where he will demonstrate the use of old-fashioned tools and farming methods. There is also great riding, as you pass through the different landscapes of each valley, cross bridges and see crops like tree tomatoes that grow in nearby fields. Later on in the route you pass the lovely painted houses of La Magdalena on your way to Cunrro, where the entire valley opens up in incredible views. Lunch will be a picnic near La Magdalena or in the mountain community of La Rinconada. After lunch, return to Zuleta along the forested paths of Mount Cunrro and through Zuleta village itself.

Zuleta to Cusin (full day)

This route offers the chance to experience another beautiful hacienda, called Cusin, a seventeenth-century estate, even older than Zuleta. Hacienda Cusin is

full of charm with sumptuous gardens and colonial style rooms. Following a path through the community and up the side of Mount Cubilche, the views reach across Vista Lago. Then wind your way towards Hacienda Cusin, which is close to the lake and Mount Imbabura. Close by is the Monastery of Cusin and its animal enclosures which are full of horses, llamas, chickens and ducks and showcase the range of livestock that haciendas used to keep. Have a picnic nearby and then take a stroll to discover a little of Hacienda Cusin. Later, return to Zuleta in time for a relaxing evening.

Ventana Grande (full day)

This route takes you up the hill known as Santa Rosa, then follows the Fox Trail to the top where stunning vistas await. Continue the ascent and watch the vegetation shift from tall trees to bushes. Further on is the tall grassland and unique bio-sphere of the páramo (high Andes). We follow the undulating course of La Rinconada de San Pedro towards the distant craggy summit known as Ventanas (windows). The reason for the name becomes clear when you reach Ventana Grande – a massive volcanic rock formation that acts as a window on the mountains beyond. Admire the views as you stop for lunch, before returning via the same route but experiencing the magnificent views in reverse.

The Towers (full day)

For another view of Zuleta's páramo, take the opposite route, riding first down long tree-lined avenues past Rosario's farm and the Hacienda's pastures. At a stone bridge, take the road up the mountain, ascending the highest of the Caranqui mounds which has become part of the ridge, then venturing upwards. Follow switchbacks, seeing Zuleta's fields become a patchwork quilt, as the view opens up to include the distant haze of Ibarra and the volcanos of Cusin, Imbabura, Cayambe, and Antisana. The crags of Ventanas and the páramo become come into view as you ascend, with fields and woods giving way to the classic tall grass. Finally, reach the lookout near the electric towers that link power-lines across the remote highlands. The scenery from here is stupendous, with a 360 degree view of the Avenue of Volcanos. Rest here and have a picnic lunch before returning down the mountain to Zuleta.

Páramo Cusin (full day)

Another páramo experience from a different vantage point. Mount Cusin sprawls over the southwestern side of the Zuleta Valley, giving views of San Pablo Lake and Mount Imbabura to the north and snow-capped Cayambe to the south. Start by cutting through the farmland of neighbouring Hacienda La Merced and over the crest of Santa Rosa. The pastureland turns to meadows and then to woodland groves. Ride upwards towards Cusin, past gullies of eucalyptus until the incline becomes steeper and the pace slows. The horses forge their way up towards the high grasslands, climbing 1,300 metres during the next few hours. At each turn, the air gets colder and the view grows increasingly spectacular, featuring the Mojanda range, Mount Imbabura, San Pablo Lake, and Mount Cotacachi. This is a rare sight; only a few park rangers and locals in search of thatch venture this high. The land is a mixture of strange volcanic formations and caves. Trust in your horse and your knowledgeable guides to lead you safely as you continue to see the snow-capped peaks of Cayambe, Antisana and Cotopaxi in all their glory. Stop for a picnic lunch when you reach flat ground again. Return to Zuleta via a different route.

Condor, Waterfall & Community Ride (full day)

Take a wide looping ride through rich pastures with incredible mountain views. Visit the culture and art of the Zuleta community, experience the magical Caranqui tolas and learn about the wildlife of the area at the Condor House. Lunch will be a picnic along the way.

Condor Project (half day)

A ride in the La Rinconada de San Pedro valley. Here you can learn about Zuleta's wildlife and the efforts to protect and nurture endangered condors and spectacled bears. Ride past the Hacienda's pastures, milking sheds and trout farm via pretty cobblestone roads. See many ancient Caranqui tolas – pyramids dating from before the Inca conquest. On the way back, you may choose to climb the highest ceremonial pyramid, which offers great views of the area. You may also see wild condors along the way, taking advantage of the high winds on the mountainside. The ride includes an hour-long talk at the Condor Huasi facilities.

Zuleta Cultural Ride (half day)

An in-depth look at the history and culture of Zuleta. This ride takes you through the village to an interesting house museum at the community's highest point. Here you will find many well-preserved examples of Zuleta's traditional farming, weaving and cooking implements as well as weapons, fine leatherwork and other interesting items. Along the way there are views of snow-capped Mount Cayambe and surrounding landscapes. Stop by the community's famous embroidery shops, where you can learn about this centuries-old art and purchase some lovely gifts if you wish. See the cemetery, town hall and church along the way. There may also be an opportunity to see a local leather specialist who makes all of the Hacienda's saddles and leatherwork.

Zuleta Hills (half day)

Stand on the shoulders of the mountains as you venture to the pinnacle of Santa Rosa. Climb winding paths, glimpsing the Hacienda through eucalyptus trees. Then pass a small reservoir and waterfall as you continue on to high pastures where the entire valley opens up before you. Further north, the mountains meander down beyond Angochagua and La Rinconada to the city of Ibarra, while behind lies the mysterious wilderness of the Andean páramo. Circle round to the Vista Condor to catch magnificent views of La Rinconada de San Pedro Valley, with its condor facilities and Caranqui pyramids, before returning home through fragrant cypress and eucalyptus groves.

Mount Cunro (half day)

On this ride you will see a different side of the Zuleta valley. Leave from the main gate, passing through the village then climb through pastures and fields towards Mount Cunro, an extinct volcano. If weather permits, you may see behind you the glorious Mount Cayambe, a snowy peak with an elevation of 5,790m. Cunro dominates this side of the valley – a vast, conical hill jutting from the foot of Mount Imbabura and surrounded by woodland at its base. Pass through cool eucalyptus groves and at the summit, enjoy views of Zuleta's green, furrowed mountains stretching all the way from the Hacienda through to Angochagua and towards Ibarra. After a short rest, descend back to the village and return to the Hacienda.

Angochagua Cultural Ride (half day)

Head north, past the milking sheds and verdant fields, where you can take a quick detour to the waterfall if you wish. At the Hacienda's limits, reach a road leading to the picturesque farming community of Angochagua, nestled in a crook of the mountains. Following a stream, visit the Andean home of Fernando Colimba, a native of the area, who built the classic adobe and thatched roof property as a house museum to preserve his local culture. Here he demonstrates age-old techniques for grinding corn and spinning wool and shows you old artefacts from the area's agricultural past. Return, riding up the shoulder of Mount Cunro and through the community to see these old farming ways in action. NB. Please tell your host in advance if you wish to do this ride so that we can arrange for the museum to be open.

Waterfall Ride (short ride)

This ride takes you along cobblestone roads to the north to an area called La Cocha ('lake' in Kichwa). Pass green pastures dotted with woods and more of Zuleta's renowned Caranqui pyramids. Upon reaching a stone bridge, head towards Rinconada Santa Marta and discover El Molino – the Hacienda's restored watermill. Dismount here and take a short walk through lush vegetation to a waterfall on the Tahuando River. On your return, pass by Rosario's farm where you can admire the Hacienda's beautiful Andalusian stallion. Finally, continue down a long avenue back to the Hacienda.

Community of Zuleta (short ride)

A ride around the quaint village of Zuleta. Leave via the Hacienda's main gate and pass embroidery shops specializing in this beautiful art developed throughout centuries. After the ride you can purchase crafts and souvenirs handmade by the community if you wish. Ride up to the cemetery and reach the top of the village where there are views towards snow-capped Mount Cayambe. Traditional adobe and tiled houses dot the landscape, surrounded by patchwork fields. Return through the village, passing the church, the community field, and the town hall. On the way, you can see more views of the valley and the day-to-day lives of the people as they work the land and embroider traditional clothes.

Condor's View (short ride)

Experience Zuleta through the eyes of a condor as you take the route up Santa Rosa hill behind the main house. The ascent opens onto spectacular views of the Hacienda, the surrounding fields, and the nearby village. Then reach a charming reservoir nestled in the hills with a tiny waterfall further on. Climbing higher, past eucalyptus saplings, reach cypress and pine groves and the stunning Vista Condor. Here you can admire views from above La Rinconada de San Pedro Valley, the Condor Huasi Project facilities and the Caranqui pyramids. You may also see wild condors soaring on the mountain thermals. Continuing down a rural trail through aromatic woods, the Hacienda can be glimpsed from different angles. This route also offers opportunities to spot different wild flowers and plants, such as native bromeliads and heliconias whose fruits are a spectacled bear's delight.

Rounding Up the Herd (short ride)

La Manada (the herd) takes the same route past pastures and mysterious Caranqui mounds as the Condor Project trail, but in the early morning when mists often cover the mountainside. Join a chagra as he rounds up the hacienda's herd of over forty Zuleteño horses from their pastures amongst the pyramids and drives them back to the Hacienda. If you would like to take part, please inform your host a day in advance.

Hacienda Zuleta dates back to the 17th Century and has been home to two former presidents of Ecuador.



Zuleta's main courtyard

This traditional hacienda has 21 guest rooms, as well as characterful lounges and living rooms, two dining rooms and a library.



One of the lounge areas

There are two Standard Rooms, nine Deluxe Rooms, eight Junior Suites and two Suites. There are no twin rooms in the Standard Room category.



One of the living rooms, with the library above

Each room has a private bathroom with bathtub or shower. Bathrooms are equipped with towels, bathrobes, shampoo, body lotion, soap, shower gel/bubble bath, shower cap and hairdryer.



One of the Standard Rooms

The guest rooms are located in the main hacienda building which dates back to 1691. Each room has its own fireplace and is individually decorated with antique furniture, with views of the gardens or the mountains beyond.



A typical Deluxe Room

Some rooms have direct access to the gardens, whilst others have a private terrace or seating in one of the courtyards. It is lovely to relax on the terrace with a cup of coffee and watch long-tailed hummingbirds flit between the feeders.



One of the Junior Suites

Satellite television, films and games are available in one of the living rooms, as well as coffee, soft drinks and bar drinks. There is also an onsite spa at Hacienda Zuleta offering various treatments.



The spa area

Outside there is even more to see, from the dairy and organic vegetable gardens, to the working farm and pre-Inca Caranqui Mounds.



View of the hacienda from the stables

You will be transferred to Quito airport.